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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 007871

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [FR](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION OF WAIVER FOR FRANCE OF LIBERTAD  
ACT TITLE III

REF: A. STATE 207359

[B](#). PARIS 7145

[C](#). PARIS 7779

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and comment: France adheres to the EU's Common Position on Cuba, and the GoF monitors the human rights situation in Cuba closely. MFA officials have consistently stressed that they share both the U.S. assessment of the human rights situation and the U.S. goal of supporting peaceful evolution to democracy, even if our approach on methods for achieving this end differ. Notably, recent discussions indicate that the GoF may be reevaluating the "constructive dialogue" approach it had previously touted due to the lack of improvement in the human rights situation in Cuba. French support at the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva has been crucial in securing the last several resolutions criticizing the Castro regime's human rights record. Legislation against French persons or entities as a result of implementation of Libertad Act Title III would be detrimental to Franco-American relations and could also have negative effects on our relations with the EU. Based on France's solid record of criticizing the Castro regime and seeking to change the state of human rights in Cuba, through the EU and bilaterally, as well as the negative ramifications of implementation, post recommends a waiver of Title III of the Libertad Act. End summary and comment.

France/EU On Human Rights Situation in Cuba  
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[1](#)2. (C) As an EU member state, France supports the EU Common Position of 1996. This position was strengthened in 2003 in response to the arrest of 75 dissidents by the Castro regime. In January 2005 the EU voted to suspend the sanctions imposed in 2003 for six months, and in June 2005 the suspension was continued until June 2006. MFA officials have noted that they have not been impressed with the Castro regime's response thus far. After the 2003 crackdown, France suspended bilateral police assistance outside of efforts to combat narco-trafficking.

Past Six Months of France's Cuba Policy  
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[1](#)3. (C) France had the dubious honor of being the first country whose national day arose after the June 2005 suspension of sanctions. In an attempt to "engage in dialogue" and appease both dissidents and the GoC, the GoF invited each party to separate ceremonies held on concurrent days. Since then, additional crackdowns by the Castro regime in July and Cuba's refusal to liberate dissidents has soured the French in recent months. The MFA reports that on October 11, French Foreign Minister Phillipe Douste-Blazy delivered a strong message to Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque in a meeting completely dedicated to the human rights situation in Cuba (ref B), calling for the release of all dissidents. Although not yet willing to take a decisively hard line against Cuba, the GoF is adopting a "wait-and-see" approach; however, this could eventually result in a genuine policy shift if the GoC does not make a "gesture" in releasing dissidents (ref C).

French Investments in Cuba  
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[1](#)4. (U) According to the MFA, foreign direct investments in Cuba totaled around USD 6 billion at the end of 2004, with France ranked fourth among international investors with 6 percent of the total (behind Spain at 25%, Canada at 20%, and Italy at 19%). Around 40 French firms have a presence in Cuba, but only 18 French firms have established subsidiaries or operate under mixed status. Most investments are made by large multinational enterprises, in sectors such as tourism, telecommunications, energy, agricultural foods, and banking.

[1](#)5. (U) According to the French Finance Ministry, French investment in Cuba is steadily declining. Although interest remains, significant new investments are deterred by Cuba's persistent refusal to honor its financial obligations. In October 2005, French firms participating in a trade show in Cuba included Devexport, representing AREVA T&D, Alstom Power Services, Vergnet, Photowatt, Valorga, Geismar, Inovene,

Tecofi, KDI, Facom, Catu, Saint-Gobain Desjonqueres, Saint-Gobain VG, and Ampec; Peugeot; Renault Trucks, Michelin; Steco; Linde; Citroen; Finca representing Concorde, Henkel, MTB and Assainibio; AMC (an aviation consultant); Ugao SA, representing Babcock Caribe, AMEC Spie, Symag Services, Beicip Franlab, Industrie Roland, Deweo and Dutchy Motors; CMA-CGM; GBH-Bamotors Ltd representing Renault Cuba; Arc Antilles Diffusion SARL; Tenesol SA; and Castel & Fromaget Groupe Fayat.

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Stapleton